

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 29, 2014, for the purpose of discussing the Five (5) Classrooms at Old Greenbelt Middle School.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:04p.m. The meeting was held in Room 201 of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; David Moran, Assistant City Manager; Julie McHale, Director and Joe McNeal, Assistant Director of Recreation.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: David Lange, David Whaples, Molly Lester, Bill Orleans, Laura Kressler, Lois Brown and Valerie Young, Greenbelt News Review. Board of Education Representative Peggy Higgins arrived at 8:23 pm.

Mayor Jordan stated this was a continuation of the discussion about the old Greenbelt middle school, particularly the five classrooms available for potential City use. Mr. McLaughlin reported a preliminary quote from the school system of \$10/square foot to lease the space. He noted that earlier rates of about \$5/square foot had been quoted.

There was discussion about the necessary renovations to the space. Council questioned what renovations were needed. Mr. McNeal cited a \$200,000-\$350,000 estimated cost to perform renovations similar to what had been done to renovate the rest of the building.

Mr. Putens relayed a conversation with Peggy Higgins indicating the \$10/square foot lease rate was negotiable.

Mr. Roberts believed the 7,000 square foot figure was too high. He did not believe the space should be used for Recreation, but believed CARES or Code Enforcement could utilize the space. There was also discussion of the need for City storage space. Mr. Roberts stated the lease cost should be based on usable space not hallways and utility rooms and if the City was going to incur renovation costs, there would have to be a reduction in the lease rate.

Mr. Herling asked about the total lease cost at \$5/square foot. Based on 7,000 square feet, this cost would be \$35,000 per year.

Ms. Pope stated it was nice usable space. She was concerned about its condition and wanted to get a solid cost estimate for renovation costs.

Ms. Davis wanted a renovation cost estimate right away. She asked if CARES would want to use the space. Mr. McLaughlin responded the space is nice, but was in an isolated location. Ms. Davis noted a need for increased toilets depending on the type of use. She stated that a 30 day termination notice was unacceptable. Ms. Davis stated that it would be expensive storage space.

Mayor Jordan wanted the school system to renovate the space, particularly the bathrooms.

Ms. Mach asked about the City's current costs for records storage. She thought the space would be good for Social Services activities and stated the City should not let this opportunity pass.

Mr. Putens stated the City needed to provide services in Greenbelt West. He believed a 3-5 year lease was needed and wanted the School System to be responsible for maintenance. Mr. Putens suggested there could be opportunities to partner with other municipalities.

Mayor Jordan noted there would be security considerations.

Mr. Roberts asked where the CARES clients were coming from. Mr. McLaughlin agreed to check and report back to Council.

Mr. Herling questioned where the City would get the renovation money. Mr. Putens and Mayor Jordan relayed that during the prior tour, Dr. Maxwell had indicated that everything was negotiable.

Ms. Higgins did not have any additional information about lease rates or possible school system uses for the space. She stated negotiations would be with the school system administration and the ultimate approval would come from the Board of Education. In response to a question, Ms. Higgins stated the Board was likely to back the Administration's recommendation regarding this matter.

Mr. Roberts preferred cost estimates from a contractor other than just Gardiner and Gardiner.

Ms. Pope asked where the \$200-350,000 estimate came from. It was explained that this rough estimate had been provided by the school system following the prior tour.

Ms. Davis requested a cost estimate in the next two weeks.

Mr. Lange reported that two years ago a \$4 per square foot lease rate had been quoted. He noted the Board of Education had already approved the rental of the five rooms to the City of Greenbelt on January 24, 2012. Mr. Lange expressed concern that the needs of Greenbelt West residents should be discussed.

Ms. Brown stated that Franklin Park had many needs. She cited a pre-school/head start program as a community need. Ms. Brown indicated she was part of the child care cooperative effort, but indicated there was no space available for them. She also believed English as Second Language (ESOL) classes were needed as well as education programs for parents. She believed the classrooms could be used for these classes. Ms. Brown wanted Council to help the residents of Franklin Park.

Mr. Lange believed the services at Old Greenbelt Middle School would serve people on the other end of the community. He noted there had been many changes since the Task Force report. Mr. Lange stated that citizens of Greenbelt West had needs that weren't being served and there was an inequity in City services.

Mayor Jordan referenced emails from several task force members expressing concern about the current proposal. Mr. Lange responded these members were particularly responding to the 30 day clause. Mr. Lange suggested a one or two year experiment. Mr. Roberts favored a long term lease.

Mr. Whaples stated that the upper levels had received relatively minor renovations (i.e., paint, equipment, etc.) He stated that highest and best use for that building was a school. Mr. Whaples believed the City should first determine its need and then find the best space/location that fits the need. He thought the process was upside down. In response to a question, Mr. Whaples didn't think the renovation estimate being quoted was unreasonable and noted that many of the costs were behind the walls.

Ms. Higgins suggested the City should do its own custodial work.

Mr. Herling observed that the needs cited by Ms. Brown were real. He thought it would be great to have a pilot program there. He also thought there should be a long range plan to address needs in Greenbelt West.

Ms. McHale stated that in addition to renovation and lease costs, there would also have to be subsidies provided to conduct programs there. Ms. McHale believed subsidies and outreach were the greatest need in Greenbelt West.

Ms. Pope suggested Ms. Brown consider the St. Hugh's school for a cooperative school. Ms. Mach responded that this group needed something located in Franklin Park.

Ms. Davis suggested that Springhill Lake Elementary needed a pre-kindergarten program. She noted another need was for more meeting space. Ms. Davis thought CARES was the most viable use for the space.

Mr. Roberts stated that City departments were using space in the Community Center and by relocating these departments, space would be made available in the Community Center. He stated CARES needed more space.

Ms. Pope suggested the City identify its top three needs.

Mayor Jordan stated that lease and renovation costs needed to be dealt with and that the City needed to respond to the School System quickly. He asked for a sense of Council. Mr. McLaughlin suggested staff get back to Ms. Goldson and state there's still interest, but the details need to be discussed further. He wanted to get a good renovation estimate.

Ms. Davis agreed the City needed a renovation cost estimate. She also believed that the Planning & Community Development and CARES departments needed to be consulted.

Mayor Jordan suggested discussing partnership ideas at the upcoming 4-Cities meeting.

Ms. Mach & Ms. Davis agreed that ESOL and literacy classes made sense for the space.

Mr. Putens stated that the City needed to move quickly. He also wanted the ability to sublet space and have flexibility in the Lease agreement. Mayor Jordan agreed.

Mr. McLaughlin discussed the issue of need. He cited the long list of unfunded City projects that were also needed.

Ms. Davis expressed neutrality and said it would depend on the cost and the needs/uses identified.

Ms. Pope expressed concern and was not a fan of the idea. She needed to see the numbers and noted the City's other priorities.

Mr. Lange believed it was the School System staff not the Board of Education that needed to be negotiated with. He suggested that Fieldstone and Franklin Park residents needed to be involved in the discussion.

Mr. Roberts noted that the building had been brought back to life as a school. Mr. Herling believed that economic development comes into play here by generating more revenue so the City can pay for these programs. He also liked use of rooms for meeting space.

Ms. Pope recalled that Fieldstone had offered to partner with the City at the last work session meeting.

Mr. Putens expressed frustration with the attitude of the French Immersion School about sharing the school building with Greenbelt programs. He wanted an explanation of this given that the taxpayers are supporting that school.

Ms. Mach reported on a meeting with Principal Nasser and relayed that he was interested in knowing whether the City would sponsor a Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program at the French Immersion School. She reported that the school was waiting for Verizon and Comcast to move equipment before demolishing the former administrative wing.

Mr. Lange suggested a stakeholder work session between the French Immersion School and the City.

Information items

Mr. Herling referenced a Request for Proposal which he planned to present at the 4-Cities meeting regarding the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) headquarters relocation promotional video. He indicated he would be seeking financial contributions from each municipality.

Ms. Pope relayed Senior Citizen Advisory Committee concerns from their recent senior forum.

Ms. Davis cited the Lets Move Award being presented to Greenbelt at the upcoming National League of Cities Convention.

There was discussion of the draft Economic Development report from Sage Policy Group. Mayor Jordan wanted the economic development report presented in a different format and believed Council needed a focus group type session with the consultant.

The meeting ended at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*